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By Jon Meyer

## New Road Means More Fun

A flood of tourists and money could pour into our area, thanks to big changes at a flood control dam in Luzerne County. All it took was building a new road; a road that is expected to turn a lake into an even bigger recreation spot and give white water rafting on the Lehigh River a big boost.

The federal government pumped \$2.8 million into the project at the Francis E. Walter Dam near White Haven.

The construction of a new road there will allow higher water for fishing and boating and more water released for better rafting on the river below.

James Walsh of Mountain Top and his son cast a line along the shore of the dam in Luzerne and Carbon counties.

"It's nice to do on a nice day, come here, have a good time with your family, your child," Walsh said.

Before, getting to the fishing and boating spot meant driving dozens of miles around the lake itself. The old road went from the top of the dam, down the slope and along the base of the dam. Sometimes that meant the road was under water. When that happened, fishing and boating were better, but access was cut off to the rest of the lake.

The opening of a road high above the reservoir on the dam itself means the water can stay at higher levels and it's easier to use the lake.

In the past, water levels in the summer were low so the old road could be used. Now water levels are higher people can fish and releases can be made for rafting below the dam.

"Now we have the experience people are looking for at the time they want to do it, when it's warm to splash around and enjoy the water," said Ken Powley. He runs White Water Challenges in White Haven.

He expects a big benefit to the Lehigh River rafting business; an anticipated \$30 million more in tourist spending.

Higher levels in the dam mean more water releases, from seven a year up to 22, insuring high water for rafting all season long.

"It's money and good notoriety for the area. A lot of people we deal with are from New York, New Jersey, Virginia. They go home saying good things about northeastern Pennsylvania which is great," Powley added.

You can now reach to the Francis E. Walter Dam area from Route 940 in Carbon County and the Bear Creek/White Haven Road in Luzerne County.

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